

3 November 2020

Agenda Item No. 10

## **The Children and Families Strategy for 2020-23: Belonging to Fife -Phase 3**

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Report by: Carrie Lindsay, Executive Director (Education & Children's Services)

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Wards Affected: All

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### **Purpose**

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This paper provides an update on the current Children and Families strategy (2015 - 2020) and an overview of the three-year plan (2020-2023), to achieve improved outcomes for children and young people by ensuring that they are supported to:

- remain in their own families and communities wherever it is safe to do so
- develop meaningful relational based supports
- access a range of targeted supports that are visible and available within local communities

### **Recommendation(s)**

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The Education and Children's Services Committee is asked:

- To approve the strategy going forward

### **Resource Implications**

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The Children and Families budget is projected to overspend by £1.4m in 2019-20. This is against an initial predicted £10.5 m overspend. Significant savings have been achieved through implementation of Phase 3 of the Strategy 'Belonging to Fife'. There is need to progress key strategic aims to ensure this revised position can be sustained.

### **Legal & Risk Implications**

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The implementation of the three-year strategy maintains the Council's legal obligations to supporting vulnerable children and helps to minimise risk of poorer outcomes for looked after children, those who are care experienced and other vulnerable children.

### **Impact Assessment**

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The implementation of the three-year strategy introduces change to services for looked after children, those who are care experienced and other vulnerable groups.

The re commissioning of the third sector will be subject to an EIA as required.

The strategy draws on engagement with staff and children in receipt of social work services.

## 1.0 Overview of Phases 1 and 2 of the Children and Families Strategy (2015 to 2020)

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### PHASE 1 – HOME2FIFE

- 1.1 Phase 1 of the Children and Families Strategy was introduced in January 2015, in response to a significant and sustained increase in the numbers of children and young people being supported by Social Work, who required external residential care and foster care (purchased placements).
- 1.2 Purchased placements had increased significantly over a three-year period (from 2011/12 to 2014/15) resulting in a significant overspend on the service budget.
- 1.3 Whilst the reasons for this increase were complex, if demand continued, service spend over the five-year period to 2019/20 would have reached approximately £81.6m, with 600 children and young people requiring purchased foster or residential care. (See dash trend line in figure 1).
- 1.4 Whilst the financial costs were unsustainable, there were known increased vulnerabilities and poorer outcomes for children and young people living away from their families and community.
- 1.5 Focussing on the budget alone, does not provide a representative picture of the complex and varied work that the Social Work Service undertakes with families, or the changing legislative and economic context they operate within. Poverty and its impact is known to be the most significant contributor to families coming to the attention of formal services. Whilst less than 10% of children and young people open to social work required purchased foster or residential care, this presented the largest demand on the social work budget.
- 1.6 In 2015 significant investment was made into Children and Families Social Work, in recognition that Fife had one of the lowest ratios of social workers per capita of children and young people. Additional staff were recruited, resources were redeployed, and focus was placed on augmenting the range of preventative supports, to divert the need for more resource intensive and formal care options.
- 1.7 Phase 1 of the Strategy was successful in halting the pre-strategy trend of increasing demand and achieved its original financial goal over this period, ensuring a balanced budget. It also enabled the number of looked after children in Fife to be maintained at a level below that which would be proportionate, given Fife's size and levels of child poverty.



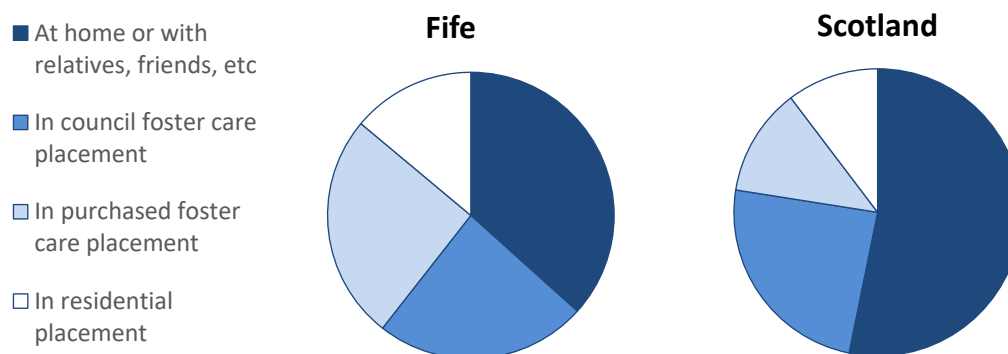
**Figure 1.** The impact of the Children & Families Strategy – Phases 1 and 2.

The bars show the number of purchased placements at the end of each financial year (NB – the data for 2019/20 is a provisional figure for the end of January).

The dash line shows the pre-strategy trend, with a sustained increase in demand for purchased placements. The solid line shows the aim of the original strategy.

## **PHASE 2 – HOME2FIFE**

- 1.8 In January 2019 the Directorate introduced Phase 2 of the strategy Home2Fife. This was in response to a further spike in residential care. The strategy remained focussed on supporting children and young people to live within their own families and communities, but also undertook a wider review of the resources available to families across Fife and their agility in meeting changing need.
- 1.9 Changes in national policy such as continuing care which enabled young people to remain in their care placement until the age of 21 years, and the promotion of kinship care; incurring a long-term financial commitment, shifted demand on social work services, increasing the profile of children and young people being ‘in care’ and incurring additional spend.
- 1.10 Costs of care in Fife were showing to be above the national average and support services across all sectors, whilst valuable, were not providing a cohesive range of supports across each of the geographical areas, to confidently deliver and progress the strategy within this changing context.
- 1.11 Whilst, the overall size of the Looked After population remained at or below the Scottish average, which was the success of phases 1 and 2 of the strategy, the profile of children and young people in care in Fife remained significantly skewed towards purchased foster care and residential placements, with significantly fewer looked after children being cared for at home or with friends, relatives, etc (see figure below). Again, this placed a disproportionate pressure on the budget spend.



**Figure 2.** Comparison of the profile of care for Looked After Children in Fife, with that in Scotland (based on the most recent published national data on Looked After Children, the Children Looked After Statistics 2017-18).

## 2.0 Phase 3 of the Strategy -Belonging to Fife

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- 2.1 Phase 3 of the Children and Families Strategy rebadged in 2019 as ‘Belonging to Fife’.
- 2.2 This focussed on reducing service overspend through:
  - shifting the balance of care (reducing purchased residential and foster care-B2F)
  - reducing unit care costs
  - service redesign and
  - achieving savings through 3<sup>rd</sup> sector commissioning.
- 2.4 The success of Belonging to Fife (B2F) exceeded our original ambition and expectations.
- 2.5 First stage service redesign allowed resources to be dedicated to expediting children and young people’s plans to return home /or supporting them to remain in Fife. Increasing internal residential, fostering, kinship and supported lodgings extended support to families in crises.
- 2.6 Residential care dedicated to short term support (STEPP) reaffirmed the focus on ‘family’ and is changing practice, albeit there will always be need for a blended approach, with longer term care options.
- 2.7 The significant shift in Fife’s profile of care, with reductions in High Cost Residential Care, had delivered on the majority of savings required. This offset the unachieved savings from unit costs, and ambition around this is less pronounced due to the changing profile of need.
- 2.8 The reduction in purchased foster care wasn’t realised, as a review pf child’s plans evidenced that the majority were underpinned by permanence orders or permanence plans. We are clear, both ethically and legally, that budget decisions cannot be the driver to disrupt children’s homes/living arrangements.

- 2.9 The review of the third sector is work ongoing. Having progressed the strategy and shifted some internal resource, we need to ensure other resources can be positioned to better meet the changed need and revised profile of care within Fife. This will ensure the support plans for children and young people who have moved back into area are sufficiently robust and sustained.
- 2.10 These areas of work continue to be a focus of improvement in line with the ambitions of the Independent Care Review and our improvement agenda.
- 2.11 It is without doubt, that the work to achieve this position started with Home to Fife in 2018, picking up pace in January 2020 but didn't translate into financial savings until more recently.
- 2.12 The impact of Covid -19 and potential lockdown provided a further trigger to supporting children and young people's moves back home as parents and children exercised their rights to re-unite families and avoid the potential of disrupted contact.
- 2.13 The shift in the balance of care has not been without cost and there has been significant increase in the numbers of children and young people supported in kinship care or family support arrangements. Whilst the financial support is relatively low, in comparison to purchased foster care, they tend to be payments throughout childhood, so present a longer-term financial commitment. This is an area of work we are reviewing in conjunction with the anti-poverty spend.
- 2.14 Alongside this we have supported 6 Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) into Fife.
- 2.15 The data below shows changes in the balance of care since 2015.

Residential care data over 5 years, showing a significant decrease:

Date	Purchased residential care	Out of Fife	Internal residential
June 15	132	75 (57%)	17
Oct 17	96	40 (41%)	17
March 19	133	59 (44%)	16
Sept 2020	60	26 (40%)	22

Foster care data over 5 years showing a decrease:

Date	Internal FC	Purchased FC	Total
March 15	291	217	508
Sept 17	240	221	461
March 19	243	241	484
Sept 2020	198(155)	209 (161)	407

Kinship care data over 5 years, showing a significant increase:

Date	Paid kinship	Unpaid kinship	Non LAC kinship	Family Support	Total
March 15	92	92	125	226	538
March 17	137	50	254	68	561
March 19	156	24	311	107	598
Sept 2020	227	33	353	126	737

Continuing Care Data over 5 years, showing a significant increase:

Date	Supported lodgings	Continuing Care	UASC	
March 15	19	0		
Sept 2020	41	52	4	

- 2.16 Whilst we are on the right side of the trend, and meeting the aims of our strategy, in terms of the balance of care; more children and young people being supported with family as opposed to in foster or residential care, what is clear, is that factors influencing the number of families coming to the attention of formal services is complex and we should always anticipate spikes in need, vulnerability and risk, and hold capacity to be agile and respond in different ways.
- 2.17 The full extent of the savings of our revised balance of care are now being reflected in projected service expenditure for 20/21 and will provide further full year savings 21/22, with a revised budget deficit of £1.4m.
- 2.18 We are now in the position to shift focus more onto improving practice and ‘the customer experience’, to enable further efficiencies and greater effectiveness in determining outcomes. This will wrap neatly around the move to place based services, being visible and accessible in the communities that families live.
- 2.19 We have concluded work with Franklin Covey on ‘improving the customer experience’ and this will inform future work around leadership approach and service redesign. This fits well with the wider Council reform.
- 2.20 The strategy remains that all children and young people should be enabled to live within their own families and communities, where safe to do so. We have committed to ensuring we have the social work resource in Fife, with a greater presence in localities.
- 2.21 The profile of need in Fife has changed and we need to ensure our strategy and approach adapts accordingly.
- 2.22 We continue to anticipate an increase in child protection activity and potential demand for residential and foster care as we move through the phases of recovery to Covid-19.
- 2.23 We have staff mobilisation plans in place to meet a 15 –25% increase in demand in child protection activity, should it occur.
- 2.24 We have internal resource available to accommodate any short-term care need.
- 2.25 We are working with providers in considering emergency external residential provision, should the need arise.

- 2.26 Our revised position means that out of the 3000 children and young people we are supporting, only 2 % are placed in HCRP. The majority of our work has been focused on those children and young people classed on the 'edge of care' and being supported through a range of family arrangements.
- 2.27 This shift is now better reflected in our strategy and lends itself to ensuring that we have targeted supports in place that are family and community facing, being available and accessible to families when they need it. This fits with B2F, the Council wider reform agenda and the recommendations of the Independent Care Review (The Promise), with supports services being place based, operating seven days a week.
- 2.28 Capitalising on our revised position, we have been able to set stretch targets for children and young people in HCRP and expedite plans around service re design and reform.
- 2.29 The structure of social work services needs to better reflect the priorities we seek to achieve, working within families and communities, building on relational based practice. We need to increase the time that social workers have to meaningfully engage and build relationships with the children, young people and families they work alongside. We need to adopt a systems approach to the supports we offer families; working across children and families and adult services.
- 2.30 To do this we need to need to ensure there is enough resource and capacity built into the system to enhance the offer of support.
- 2.31 The table below shows that Fife has a significant gap in its fieldwork support staff and support services to families. This, with the changing profile of need on Fife, has been a primary driver in seeking to re position the 3rd sector as part of the wider review of services and ensuring we offer a family support service which is best placed to effect required change.

<b>Staff per 100,000 aged 0-17: summary</b>			
<b>Children &amp; Families</b>		<b>All fieldwork staff (Generic)</b>	
<b>Senior &amp; Main Grade Social Workers (2.04 + 2.05)</b>		<b>Senior &amp; Main Grade Social Workers (2.30 + 2.31)</b>	
Scotland	244.5	Scotland	22.0
Fife	226.7	Fife	23.4
North Lanarkshire	181.1	North Lanarkshire	34.0
<b>Other fieldwork care staff (2.06 - 2.085)</b>		<b>Other fieldwork care staff (2.32 - 2.37)</b>	
Scotland	146.9	Scotland	71.6
Fife	108.6	Fife	14.3
North Lanarkshire	98.2	North Lanarkshire	114.4
<b>Support services (2.09)</b>		<b>Support services (2.38)</b>	
Scotland	62.0	Scotland	57.8
Fife	0.0	Fife	0.0
North Lanarkshire	76.1	North Lanarkshire	300.6

**Appendix 3.** Comparison of current staffing structures with Scottish average and best in class (North Lanarkshire)

Comparison of staffing based on most recent SSSC staffing return (December 2017).

## **3.0 Phase 3 of the Children and Families Strategy – B2F**

### **Challenges**

- 3.1 The Independent Care Review (The Promise) places additional expectations on how services should work together to meet the needs of children, young people and families who are/or become part of the care system. There is additional ask of universal services and explicit ask around reform and redesign of services -not to fix a broken system but to fundamentally change the way we provide care for children and their families. This is whole system change and will require all services and agencies in Fife to work within the principles detailed in the Promise and reflected in the Belonging to Fife Strategy (Appendix 1).
- 3.2 Whilst these expectations are built into our strategy, they also require wider Council and partnership reform.
- 3.3 We know from Phases 1 -3 that the operating context is dynamic and needs to be future proofed to meet changes in legislation, policy and economic context alongside changing demographics, Covid recovery planning and increases in poverty.
- 3.4 There are extensive resource demands in meeting the requirements of the National Historic Abuse Enquiry, out with any personal impact.
- 3.5 The external marketplace has changed, and the sustainability of some providers is more vulnerable because of reduced demand.

## **4.0 Phase 3 of the Children and Families Strategy - Belonging to Fife**

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### **Recommendations**

- 4.1 Following the success of Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the Home 2 Fife strategy, we are moving forward with Phase 3, 'Belonging to Fife'.
- 4.2 The Directorate's ambition is to be significantly better than the Scottish average by 2023 in terms of securing better outcomes for children and young people, through improved service delivery, quality and cost.
- 4.3 We have an ambitious aim to come in on budget by 2020/21 and for this to be sustained. This will allow us to invest differently in children and families care and to improve the experience of families who have need of more targeted supports to effect greater change.
- 4.4 We are developing our residential resource within Fife to provide high quality support to young people, offering short-term and longer-term care; whilst continuing work with the wider family group.
- 4.5 We still have a disproportionately high number of children and young people in purchased foster care. These children and young people are living in the right place for them at this time. This is a reform area we are keeping under active review.
- 4.6 Service re design is being progressed to front load services whilst shifting to a place-based model that works more closely with families in the communities that they live.



- 4.7 We plan to build on the professional role of social work and further promote relational based practice, ensuring workers have the time and resource to invest in families and communities to make the difference required.
- 4.8 We are progressing the third sector review, to ensure targeted supports are wrapped around families and reflect strategic priorities and local need. Phase 1 of the review will be presented to Committee in January 2021.
- 4.9 We are working with demand analytics to ensure 'spend' around families is achieving the best outcomes and we are effecting sustained change. We are linking this to the wider anti-poverty spend.
- 4.10 We are leading on a review of commissioning and procurement to explore potential to work across children and adult services; to build best practice, share resource and capitalise on potential spend across key strategic drivers.
- 4.11 The above plans go some way to meeting the expectations set out in The Independent Care Review (The Promise). We don't underestimate the challenge around transformational change required and are working with partners to plan how best to affect these.

## **List of Appendices**

1. The Independent Care Review

## **Background Papers**

The following papers were relied on in the preparation of this report in terms of the Local Government (Scotland) Act, 1973:

- None

## **Report Contact**

Kathy Henwood  
Head of Education & Children's Services  
Rothesay House  
Telephone: 03451 55 55 55 Extn.441189  
Email. [kathy.henwood@fife.gov.uk](mailto:kathy.henwood@fife.gov.uk)

### The Independent Care Review

Over the past 3 years an Independent Care Review has been ongoing, undertaking a “root and branch” review of the Scottish care system. It relied heavily on listening to – and understanding – the voice of Children and Young People with experience of the current care system in Scotland.

The Review concluded that Scotland’s care system must be able to support children and young people at home with their families where it is safe to do so, or which can ensure that family connections are maintained, if not.

The Review recognised the importance of developing a care system that provides more effective “Scaffolding”, recognising that “children, families and the workforce must be supported by a system that is there when it is needed. The scaffolding of help, support and accountability must be ready and responsive when it is required.”

The findings of the Independent Care Review reflect the views that we have heard in the dedicated work that we have undertaken with over 50 children and young people in residential care: they want to live with their families, or to stay together with sisters and brothers and keep connected to all family, Fife is where they belong.



### The Promise is built on Five Foundations

- VOICE:** Children and young people must be listened to and meaningfully and appropriately involved in decision-making about their care, with all those involved properly listening and responding to what they want and need. There must be a compassionate and caring decision-making culture focussed on children and those they trust.
- FAMILY:** Where children are safe in their families and feel loved they must stay - and families must be given support together, to nurture that love and overcome the difficulties which get in the way.
- CARE:** Where living with their family is not possible, children must stay with their brothers and sisters where safe to do so, and belong to a loving home, staying there for as long as needed.
- PEOPLE:** The children that Scotland cares for must be actively supported to develop relationships with people in the workforce and wider community, who in turn must be supported to listen and be compassionate in their decision-making and care.

**SCAFFOLDING:** Children, families and the workforce must be supported by a system that is there when it is needed. The scaffolding of help, support and accountability must be ready and responsive when it is required.